

Mildenhall Union Rural Sanitary Authority.

Sixth Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the Health and Sanitary Condition of the Mildenhall Rural Sanitary District of the Mildenhall Union, during the Twelve Months ending December 31st, 1894.

Prepared in accordance with the Order of the Local Government Board, dated March, 1880.

March 9th, 1895.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present my Sixth Annual Report for the year ending December 31st, 1894:—

The general Death-rate again shows a satisfactory decrease, being 15·83 per 1000 throughout the district, the rates per 1000 in former years being—16·93 in 1893; 19·74 in 1892; 19·62 in 1891; and 17·43 in 1890. Still more encouraging is the condition of the large parish of Lakenheath, where, during the past year the Death-rate was 16·98 per 1000 compared with 19·72 the previous year, and 23·56 during the year 1892, and over 30 per 1000 in 1891. For the second year in succession the Parish of Wangford with an estimated population of 50, has not had a single death registered. The Death-rate of the town and large parish of Mildenhall was only 10·98 per 1000, excluding the deaths occurring in the workhouse, which added, would raise the rate to 13·93.

Zymotic diseases, including 3 certified as due to Influenza, caused 11 deaths, viz: 2 from Croup, 4 from Diphtheria, 1 from Measles, and 1 from Erysipelas. Diarrhoea was assigned as the cause of death in 4 cases, all at Lakenheath, 2 being adults, and 2 children under five years of age.

As might be expected with such a favourable death-rate, considering the size of the district, old age has played a prominent part in the causation of deaths. In 13 cases this has been the sole cause assigned, but no less than 47 persons had attained the age of seventy years and upwards, one old lady having completed her hundredth year at Kentford, and another ninety years at Icklingham. Eleven deaths occurred in the Workhouse, but of these 7 were over 70 years of age; the other 4 being forty-four, fifty, sixty-three and sixty-five respectively.

Old age thus heading the list as the chief cause of death, Phthisis and Cardiac disease each responsible for 11 deaths, Bronchitis 8, and Apoplexy and Cancer 7 each, are next in importance. Four deaths were uncertified, and 2 inquests were held, one a labourer, accidentally drowned in a ditch, and one a laundress who committed suicide by jumping down a well at night whilst temporarily insane.

The deaths were more equally distributed throughout the several months of the year than is usually the case, the first five months—January, 14; February, 12; March, 14; April, 14; and May, 12; after which, June, July and August, 9, 6 and 8; increasing somewhat again in September to 11; October, 10; November, 9; and December, 11. Generally a considerable difference is noticed between the highest and lowest death-rate of certain months, but the past year proved an exception to the rule. In 1893, for example, 18 deaths occurred in the month of July, and in October only 4, forming a remarkable contrast; and again in 1892, 23 deaths were recorded in January, and only 1 in October, a still more marked difference.

Infantile mortality in the district is still somewhat excessive, as 23 children died under the age of one year, thus accounting for rather more than a sixth of the total for twelve months. The total number of deaths throughout the district was 130.

With regard to the births, it is curious to note that with a total number of 228 registered, exactly half were males, and half females. The birth-rate thus shows a slight increase, as, for the past year it was 26·63 per 1000, and in the year 1893, 25·82. It is still however, considerably less than in former years, and proves that at present there is no revival of prosperity in the district, but on the contrary that a large proportion of the young and able-bodied seek their living elsewhere.

It is more satisfactory to turn to the marked decrease in the number of certificates sent to me in compliance with the Compulsory Notification of Diseases Act. There were only 49, considerably less than half the number I received in the year 1893, when there

were 122. The 49 cases comprised 27 suffering from Diphtheria, 3 from Croup, 10 from Erysipelas, 6 from Scarlatina, 2 from Enteric Fever, and 1 from Continued Fever. By far the largest number of cases of Diphtheria occurred in Lakenheath, viz. 23, the other 4 being 3 at Eriswell, and 1 at Undley—villages adjoining. The 2 cases of Enteric Fever were in Mildenhall, as was the 1 case of Continued Fever, and 1 case of Scarlet Fever; the rest being 1 at Herringswell, 1 at Icklingham, and 1 at Freckenham. The 3 cases certified as Croup occurred at Lakenheath, as did 2 of Erysipelas, the remaining cases occurring at Mildenhall 7, and at Undley 1. It will thus be seen that in a year remarkably free from Zymotic Diseases, Lakenheath is still the most infected area. At no time however during the year have the diseases threatened to become seriously epidemic.

It may not be out of place here to point to the benefit that has accrued from the adoption of the Act for Notification of Diseases, and to the aid that it has afforded to the Sanitary Officials. The advantage is obvious when it is remembered that previously many cases escaped notice altogether, and others were only heard of through vague rumours, perhaps a week or two afterwards. By the timely distribution of disinfectants and printed notices, combined with visits where necessary, I am convinced that the number of cases that would have otherwise occurred has been considerably diminished. At very inconsiderable cost much has thus been done to prevent the spread of disease, and foremost amongst those doing their best to carry out the spirit as well as the letter of the Act have been the medical practitioners attending to the various cases.

~~During the past year, the Sanitary Inspector has made 196 special visits to various~~ parts of the district, inspecting upwards of 400 premises. Twenty-three written notices have been served, and 10 nuisances abated. Ten wells have been deepened, 7 closets erected, 1 accumulation of stagnant water removed and the place filled up; 18 repairs to houses completed; 3 samples of well-water sent to the Public Analyst; letters written, and the various slaughter-houses throughout the district periodically examined, in only one of which was cause found for complaint, and that was shortly afterwards remedied. In addition to that, the Sanitary Inspector has seen that the Ashbins (always a source of trouble) have been periodically cleaned out, and he has supplied disinfectants and sent notices to occupiers of houses where infectious disease existed.

No works of public importance were commenced during the year 1894, but it is gratifying to place on record that on the initiative of the Rector, and through his liberality and that of gentlemen residing in or near the village of Freckenham, a Public Hall has been erected there, which being well stocked with books and periodicals has proved of great benefit to the inhabitants. In a sanitary report it is, I think, not out of place to mention such an event, as such institutions cannot fail to do good in more ways than one.

I append the tabular forms required by the Local Government Board,

And remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

Arthur W. Aldrich, M.O.B.